

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) is leading 25 House Democrats calling on President Obama to reject the Keystone tar sands pipeline project because of an extraneous provision enacted in December that short circuits the review process. Leading the effort with Welch are Reps. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) and Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.).

Despite the ongoing review process that is scheduled to conclude in 2013, as well as an ongoing investigation into the review process by the State Department Inspector General, the two month payroll tax cut extension passed by Congress in December mandated an accelerated decision on the pipeline by February 21st.

In a letter to the President, Welch and his colleagues write, "We strongly oppose an expedited review process and urge you to reject the tar sands pipeline project because of the unnecessary and inappropriate short circuiting of the review process."

Welch has been a leader in Congress opposing the Keystone pipeline. At the urging of Welch, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and others, [the State Department Inspector General recently opened an investigation](#) into possible conflicts of interest in the pipeline review process.

The full text of Welch's letter is copied below. Signers include Reps. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Edward Markey (D-Mass.), Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.), Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), Lois Capps (D-Calif.), Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.), Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), John Conyers (D-Mich.), Michael Honda (D-Calif.), Carolyn B. Maloney (D-N.Y.), Steven Rothman (D-N.J.), Pete Stark (D-Calif.), Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y.), Tim Ryan (D-Ohio), Dennis J. Kucinich (D-Ohio), Bob Filner (D-Calif.), Mike Quigley (D-Ill.), John Olver (D-Mass.), Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.), Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), James McGovern (D-Mass.), Rush Holt (D-N.J.), Jackie Speier (D-Calif.), Chellie Pingree (D-Maine).

Dear Mr. President:

We strongly believe the Keystone tar sands pipeline poses a serious threat to the environment and public health that cannot be mitigated by the benefits of the project. And we fully support

your recent decision to extend the ongoing review process.

We are disappointed that legislation to extend the payroll tax cut includes an extraneous provision to expedite approval of the tar sands pipeline. This expedited process will bypass a thorough review of the project as well as an ongoing investigation of the review process by the State Department Inspector General.

We strongly oppose an expedited review process and urge you to reject the tar sands pipeline because of the unnecessary and inappropriate short circuiting of the review process.

PETER WELCH

Member of Congress